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Yang Ke Plays

THE LUCKY PRINCE

(text)

MAN (*speaks*):

Little fish not yet become a dragon,
I have fallen in a muddy pool in the mountains.
Born in a family of kings,
I am now living in a thatch-roofed house.
When hungry I eat coarse corn;
When thirsty I drink tasteless tea.
Ah! such is my life, such is my fate!

MAN (*sings*):

I, a prince, am shedding tears, grieving,
Wishing that I'd never been born the son of a king.
I remember when I was very young
How once the king and queen
Conspired to kill me, as they desired
To give their throne to my younger brother, their favorite.
One day they tied me to a stake and were about to kill me
When a god came who was invisible to all but me;
He carried me away I knew not where.
Though I knew not how to walk before,
I had to walk then;
One li, another, another—
Though I knew not hardship before
I had to endure it then;
I climbed one mountain, another, another—
I wept and wailed;
I wailed and wept.
At last I arrived at a village.
There by the lake shore sat an old man.

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As he had no sons or heirs he asked me to stay
And be his heir.
Here with this old man I lack nothing;
I have good food every day and suitable clothes for all the seasons.
I am now in school.
I began by learning the One Hundred Surnames;
Then the Three Character Classics;
Then the Four Books and the Five Classics.
My teacher asked me to write some compositions.
The first one I wrote was good;
The second one barely passed;
In the third I misspelled several words
For which I was rewarded with forty strokes of the rod.
Immediately afterward I fainted and dreamed dreams.
In the first dream I heard a god speak;
In the second I saw a flower-like maid;
In the third I went to hunt birds.
In rapture I awoke,
But now I am very sad
For all my dreams have vanished.
But let me see. What's this?
There are mud bullets in my pockets!
On my shoulder is a precious bow!
By the god's will my dreams are becoming real!
Slowly I walk outside the school, thinking:
"Today I will do nothing but hunt birds in the wild woods".

WOMAN (*enters and sings*):

I am flower-like Miao Mei;
I am happy in my heart.
Dressing up, beautifying myself,
I am going out to see the flowers.
With a comb of precious yellow wood,
I comb my cocoon-smooth black hair.
I step out of my embroidery room;[1]
And go to see the flowers in the garden.
Here blooms the Eternal Youth;
There the Good-Man Lotus;
All about are peonies and roses.

1. A young girl's bedroom. Having such a room indicates that her family is rich.

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I come now to the fish pond;
Red fish, green fish, and gold fish;
In pairs they swim, merrily, merrily.
But, ah! I, Miao Mei, at sixteen,
I am alone.

MAN (*seeing the girl*):

What's there? A beauty! In the garden
She sits on the rock by the lake shore.
She looks about sixteen, cannot be more.
The hair on her head is ink-black;
It is tied by a silken red thread.
Her face is painted with the famous Chiang-nan powder;
Her lips are reddened with the rouge of Su-chou;
On her ears hang a pair of golden rings, lantern-like;
Her jacket is of red silk and her skirt black.
I want to attract her attention but how can I do it?
Ah, there a bird is calling. I stop.
From my pocket I take out a mud bullet,
And straightway shoot the bird.
Lo, the bird falls in the garden
Before the lovely maid!

WOMAN:

I was looking at the flowers and the fishes;
Suddenly from a tree a bird fell at my feet.
What omen does this foretell?
Poor bird, what can have caused your death?
There was no eagle in the air;
I saw no cat on the tree.
Unfortunate bird, let me bury you.
Oh, it is a large-beaked, white-necked mountain crow!
And yonder outside the garden hedge
Stands a handsome devil!
What shall I do?
If I should throw him the bird he killed,
He would laugh at me.
Let me pretend to be ignorant of the bird.
Slowly I walk by the little lake.

MAN:

My bird fell inside the garden;
I must have it; let me go in.

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Now I have picked up the bird;
I must run out again. I run.

WOMAN:

Stop, young sir!
You are neither blind nor insane.
How dare you intrude into my garden?
If you have not come to steal the willow tree,
You have at least stolen a glimpse of me!
If you dare move one more step
I will call out and you will be caught
And be sent to court and locked up
After you have been rewarded with forty lashes.
But if you remain with me for a while,
I will be gentle with you; but I must know
What has made you intrude upon my solitude.
Your choice, young sir, a friend or a thief.

MAN:

Oh, to remain is my heart's desire.
But I say to her playfully:
"Noble young Lady, to the court
Let us go together, as you wish.
Surely not I alone am to be disgraced".

WOMAN:

You are no stupid fellow in your way of talking,
Though you do seem too handsome to be clever.
Now tell me about yourself and about your family.
In what district is your home, and in which province?
What is your father's name, and is your mother living?

MAN:

My home is not far; it is in Huang-kung-yuan.
My father is Squire Wang, and my mother is a philanthropist and a vegetarian.

WOMAN:

Tell me how many brothers you have,
And are you the youngest or which?

MAN:

I have neither an elder brother nor a younger one.
I am alone, the only son of my father.

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WOMAN:

You have married the daughter of which family?

MAN:

Being born ugly and lone I am not yet married;
No family wishes to give a daughter to an ugly man.

WOMAN:

So you are not yet married,
Nor am I yet betrothed.
This year I am sixteen years old.
I have something to say to you;
You will not think me too bold?

MAN:

Whatever you would say, pray say it without reserve;
Your humble servant is most willing to listen.

WOMAN:

I wish to marry you. Will you marry me?

MAN:

Your wish is my desire.
Let us ask a go-between to speak to our parents.

WOMAN:

You are willing and I am willing;
Pray where is the need of a go-between?

MAN:

This open place is not suitable for intimate talk.

WOMAN:

Let us go and sit in the bower.

MAN:

Let me walk ahead.

WOMAN:

Love is sweet; lovers know not shame;
A maid of sixteen follows her beau.

MAN:

Happy walk is swiftest.

WOMAN:

Here we are in the bower.

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MAN:
Out of the earth I make a calf for a sacrifice.

WOMAN:
Flowers take the place of incense.

MAN:
Having no paper we burn the flower petals.

WOMAN:
Having no music we chant our wedding hymn.

MAN:
Let us both kneel and ask heaven to bear witness.

WOMAN:
This year I am just sixteen.

MAN:
I am eighteen, two years older than you.

WOMAN:
As I am two years younger you will protect me.

MAN:
If I had known that hunting birds would give me a wife
I would not have been moping in the corner of the school.

WOMAN:
Had I known that looking at the flowers would bring me a husband
I would not have stayed in my chamber so long.

MAN:
Ah, I must go. Tomorrow I come again.

WOMAN:
May the plague take you if you do not come tomorrow.

MAN:
I kotow to you and bid you goodbye.

WOMAN:
I kotow to you and bid you farewell.

MAN (*speaks*):
Hurriedly I shall jump over the garden hedge.

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WOMAN (*sings*):

Happily I shall return to my embroidery chamber.

MAN (*speaks*):

What if your parents ask you?

WOMAN (*speaks*):

I will die before I confess.
Farewell!

MAN (*speaks*):

Goodbye!

THE MEETING AT THE BLUE BRIDGE[1]

(text)

MAN (*speaks*):

Carrying my books I go to school;
In the distance I see my home village;
In my garden there is a wu-tung tree
Waiting for the phoenix to build her nest.
Behind the embroidered screen sit beautiful girls;
From the school-room will come forth a Poet-Laureate.
I am Wei Kuei-yan. Tired of studying I am going to take a walk.
(*Exit.*)

Scene, Evening

MAN (*enters and sings*):

Kuei-yuan is at home, when
Suddenly something comes to his mind.
Lazily he leaves his seat, and slowly walks out.

1. Refers to the meeting of the Cow Boy and Weaving Girl on the 7th of the 7th moon.

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Swiftly he passes through the streets,
And soon arrives at the school-house.
He enters the school-room. It is night.
He lights a lamp to study.
But he cannot study, thinking of a fair maid.
On every page he turns he reads only her name;
Ah, he had better go to sleep,
And meet her in dreamland. (*Exit.*)

Scene, Morning

I am Lan
Sent by my mother-in-law to fetch water.
The pole on my shoulder is made of the rare box-wood.
Hurriedly I hang a pail on each end
And on my back I carry a rope twelve feet long.
Slowly I walk out of the kitchen, out of the gate;
I follow the highway leading toward the hill, toward the well.
My husband's name is Chou Yü-tzu, and mine Lan Jui-lien.
He is fifty-three years of age while I am but eighteen.
He looks like a carbuncle;
His nose is flat as a monkey's;
His mouth is big as a crocodile's;
He has an ear one-half of which is gone;
He has only one leg and half of it is festering;
And his short little queue is like sheep-wool.
Standing he is like a ghost;
Squatting he is like a mill-stone.
Toward the well I go;
One step, two steps—lotus steps,
Three, four—chrysanthemum steps;
Five, six—the tyrant's lash;
Seven, eight—Pa Wang's whip
Nine, ten—ten-colored flowers.
Forward nine steps, backward three,
I walk like a pearl-hanging-on-the-rolled-up-screen;
I walk like the spread-of-the-bottle-gourd-vine;
I walk to the north of the road;
I walk to the south of the road.
Around the well grow poplars and willow trees;
Around the well stand the white-stone railings of the Han dynasty.

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Slowly I ascend the steps to the well,
Laying aside my pole I take the rope in my hands.
Swiftly I let down the pail hanging on the hook;
Hurriedly I draw up the pail filled with water.
One pail of water being drawn up, I go on to get the other.
Both pails being filled with water, I grow tired;
My clothes are wet with sweat.
For a moment I sit down and rest before carrying the water home.

MAN (*enters and sings*):

From his school Kuei-yuan comes out, walking, thinking—
He thinks of the dream he had the night before:
He dreamed of a beautiful scene on the Blue Bridge:
In his dream he stood there and saw the fairest of women.
He has now come to this place.
He looks in front; he looks in back;
To the right; to the left;
But nowhere is she to be found.
There on the river bank an old man of eighty is fishing;
Here below a sweet maid of sixteen washing clothes—
These scenes are old, the same as last year,
But I am seeking a new scene, the scene of which I dreamed last night.
Ah, where shall I find my new scene?
Onward, onward I go.

(*He catches sight of the woman at the well*)

Who is there? Who is that?
A woman! a young woman! a beautiful young woman!
Her hair is cocoon-smooth and black as ink;
It is braided with red silk threads;
On each side of her head she wears a fresh flower
And a hairpin inlaid with kingfisher feathers;
She is dressed in flowered-cloth and crisp black skirt.
She is the very woman whom I saw in my dream last night!
Let me go near, bow to her, and speak to her.

WOMAN:

Having bowed to return your courtesy, I ask:
Has the young gentleman lost his way?
Or forgotten his home, being charmed by the natural beauty?

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MAN:

I have neither lost my way nor forgotten my home;
I am merely made thirsty by the charm of natural beauty.
Will the young lady give me a cup of her water?
I am willing to pay her whatever price she may ask.

WOMAN:

Here, young gentleman, I offer you water, free of charge.

MAN:

The young gentleman rushes forward to embrace the wooden pail;
He pretends to drink, but stealthily gazes closely at her feet.

WOMAN:

Having discovered her gentle thief, the maid is irritated:
You mean-hearted young man, you look at my feet
And you tell me you are thirsty!

MAN:

My thirst is of a kind different from that of common men.
My fair one, may I know of your family, your home village?

WOMAN:

Away! away! you mean-hearted young man;
You have stolen a close glimpse of me
And now you dare ask where my home is!
My mother's home is in the rear of the Hua Shan mountains;
My mother-in-law's in the front.

MAN:

Your husband's name, my fair one, and your own?

WOMAN:

My husband's name is Chou Yü-tzu and mine is Lan Jui-lien.

MAN:

Will you tell me, my fair one,
How old your husband is and how old you are?

WOMAN:

My husband is fifty-three and I am eighteen.

MAN:

Your husband is fifty-three while you are only eighteen!
This is what you say, my fair one?

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WOMAN:

Yes; my husband is fifty-three and I am only eighteen.

MAN:

A wife so young and a husband so old!
How you must have suffered, my fair one!

WOMAN:

I do not dislike my husband though he is old.

MAN:

Looking around and seeing no one near,
I venture to court the pretty maid:
Do not be angry at me, my fair one,
I wish to speak of you of a thing in my heart.

WOMAN:

Speak out, young man;
I take no offense at good and sincere talk.

MAN:

I want to ask you to marry me, my fair one.
Yes or no; but pray do not be angry at me.

WOMAN:

Your impertinence makes me very angry;
You had better ask your own sister to marry you!

MAN:

Your scolding provokes me, my fair one;
Pray listen to the story I tell you.

WOMAN:

I shall listen if your story is good.

MAN:

Once on a time Fan Li-hua the Beautiful
Was given in marriage by her bad uncle to Ugly Yang.
On the battlefield she fought with a young and handsome general;
She fell so desperately in love with him that
She killed her ugly old husband and married her beloved.

WOMAN:

A good woman does not marry twice.

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MAN:

You are so very young, my fair one;
Ah, how many days may a flower be blooming red?

WOMAN:

Not being a stone, my heart is moved!
Oh, what shall I think? What shall I do?

MAN:

Let me tell you about my family, my fair one.
I am a gentleman's son, living east of the river.
My name is Wei Kuei-yuan, heir to
An estate of several thousand mu of land
And a mansion of several tens of rooms.
In winter there is no lack of fur; in summer gauze.
If you smoke there is a servant to light your pipe;
When you drink, a maid always brings you hot water.
Why would you not marry me?
Why would you waste yourself on a disgusting old man?

WOMAN:

Ah, I have been persuaded by him; I am convinced,
Though I have been married by my parents to the ugly Chou,
I cannot but love this young, handsome gentleman.
Obey love I must; young sir, I will marry you.

MAN:

How lovely! How delightful!
Together we go yonder to the Blue Bridge.
There to take our betrothal oath before Heaven.
Let me lead.

WOMAN:

And I follow you.

MAN:

Here we are on the Blue Bridge.
I, Wei Kuei-yuan, kneel down before Heaven.

WOMAN:

I, Lan Jui-lien, kneel with my lover.

MAN:

I shall love you forever, my fair one!

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WOMAN:

Forever shall I love you, my young sir!

MAN:

We rise.

WOMAN:

I am going.

MAN:

Wait, give me a token to remember you by.

WOMAN:

I came out to fetch water, and brought nothing worth while.
But take this hairpin.
Hereafter when you come with this token,
Even though you are a beggar
I will not refuse you.

MAN:

Kuei-yuan is leaving.

WOMAN:

Wait, what will you give me to remember you by?

MAN:

I came out to enjoy the natural beauty, and have nothing.
Ah, let me tear a piece from my blue gown to give to you.
Hereafter when you come to me with this token,
Even though you are a servant-maid,
I will open my arms wide to receive you.

WOMAN:

Lan Jui-lien carefully takes her lover's token.

MAN:

Now I bid my lady good-bye.

WOMAN:

By the well is left Lan Jui-lien alone;
My young gentleman is gone.
I carry the two pails of water back,
Rejoicing that a new day of my life is to dawn.

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CHAO MEI-JUNG ATTENDS THE FUNERAL

(text)

(A girl by the name of Chao Mei-jung goes to attend the funeral of Chang Pao-t'ung's grandmother. When she comes near Chang's home she is told that Pao-t'ung's father has left on business in another town and Pao-t'ung's mother, Lu Feng-ying, is alone at home. By nature mischievous, Mei-jung disguises herself as a man to test playfully the chasteness and devotion of this married woman. Imitating a man's voice, she calls Pao-t'ung's mother, Lu Feng-ying, to open the door.)

CHAO MEI-JUNG (*singing in a man's voice*):

Open the door, please.

LU FENG-YING (*alone inside the house*):

Who is it?

CHAO MEI-JUNG:

I am Er-hei of the South Street. The other day when I was on the way to school I saw you. You came out to throw away the ashes. But when you had emptied your ashes, you did not leave. You made eyes at me. And on another day while I was walking on the street I met your son, Pao-t'ung. He chased after me and asked me for a cake. Today I hear that Elder-brother [referring to her husband] is not at home, so I have come to keep you company before the coffin of your mother-in-law.

LU FENG-YING (*scolding*):

I, Lu Feng-ying, am as pure as the sound of a china tea-cup struck by a pair of chopsticks. You villain! Ask any one outside whether or not Mrs. Chang has ever done anything wrong. You sickly toad! You want to eat the flesh of the heavenly swan![1] Back in your own home you also have an elder sister and a younger sister! Go and marry one of them. In two or three years a bastard child will be born. Your mother will hold it to her bosom and will first call him *sun* [son's son] and then *wei sun* [daughter's son].[2]

CHAO MEI-JUNG:

Inside the house she is scolding with wide open mouth. Outside, her humble student kotows and begs. Please listen, pretty sister-

1. Thinking of the impossible.
2. Height of insult.

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in-law Lu: I'll buy you good silk in Peking; I'll buy you silver bracelets in Nanking. Besides these I'll give you ten thousand big cash as a gift. Sister-in-law Lu, you are a fool if you don't open the door for these things.

LU FENG-YING:

Having heard the student say his say, I call to him, Dog, listen! You'd better tempt your own mother at home. Your mother has better looks than I. You'd better establish a Buddhist shrine, a round shrine, and then invite me, Feng-ying, to sit in it. Then every day you can bring me three meals and say your prayers to me while you burn incense.

CHAO MEI-JUNG:

Your student is bowing; please listen, sister-in-law Lu. If you don't open the door soon, your student will climb over the wall and jump down inside your courtyard. And then I'll carry you into the embroidery room.

LU FENG-YING:

Hearing this, Lu Feng-ying is frightened. If I say again "I won't open the door", the passers-by on the street will tell bad tales about me. If I do open the door, I'll bring shame and disgrace on my husband. With the two-horned pole I strengthen the door; I gather stones to reinforce the door; with nails I seal the door, now he can never open it! Now I go to the coffin of my mother-in-law. Having kotowed before it, I will hang myself.

CHAO MEI-JUNG:

These words frighten Chao Mei-jung. Although she has come to attend the funeral, she has said nothing about it. Why should she have made her sister-in-law Lu seek death? Thinking this, Chao Mei-jung hastens to change her costume. Taking off her man's hat, she appears with luxuriant black hair. Taking off her blue gown, she stands in her maiden dress. Slipping off the man's shoes, she walks on her golden-lotus feet. Hurriedly and loudly she shouts in her natural voice: "Sister-in-law Lu, open the door, please"!

LU FENG-YING:

Lu Feng-ying is just preparing to hang herself and suddenly hears a maiden call outside. It was a man who spoke, and now surely it is a maiden's voice. A lamp in hand, she peeps through the door-cleft; looking upward she sees the cloud of luxuriant, black hair; looking downward she sees a pair of golden-lotus feet. The one who

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called was certainly a man and now stands outside a heavenly maid. Can she be "Two-in-One?" Ah! now I have the explanation. I say: "Younger-sister, you come to attend the funeral, why haven't you spoken of it before? What tricks do you play? Fortunately I did not open the door to you. If I had, you would have exposed me to scandal! Let me remove the stones and open the door. Ah, little wench, you have almost frightened me to death!"

CHAO MEI-JUNG:

I only played a little trick on you and you scold me bitterly!

LU FENG-YING:

Had you not frightened me so, would I have scolded you?

CHAO MEI-JUNG:

If you hadn't scolded me, would I have frightened you?

A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW COMPLAINS

(text)

WANG SU-CHEN (*speaks*):

Since my little sister came home
I have not sent her to her mother-in-law's across the river.
Seeking her I go,
One li, two li, three li,
Passing by four houses, five houses,
Six pavilions, seven pavilions,
Eight flowers, nine flowers, ten flowers—

I am Wang Su-chen. Since I invited my little sister to spend a vacation with me, nine days have already elapsed. Let me ask her of the exact length of the leave of absence her mother-in-law had permitted her. Sister! Where are you? Lo! There she comes.

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HIS SISTER:

Hearing my brother's call,
I go out to meet him, asking:
"Elder Brother, pray,
What are your orders?"

WANG:

Be seated, Sister,
I wish to talk to you.

SISTER:

Thank you, Brother;
I am listening.

WANG:

How many days did your mother-in-law say you could stay here with me?

SISTER:

Ten days, Brother.

WANG:

How many days have you stayed with me already?

SISTER:

Nine days already.

WANG:

Little Sister, I am thinking of sending you back to your mother-in-law's home. What do you say?

SISTER:

Really? No, Brother—no! Brother—

WANG:

Sister, I am sorry. But I must.

SISTER:

That is to kill your sister—Ah!
(Sings):
Hearing that Elder Brother must send me back to my mother-in-law, I cannot stop my tears that flow incessantly swift as shuttles—

WANG *(sings)*:

Little Sister, do not grieve,
Do not shed tears,

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Your Elder Brother is to go with you.
Now let me go and saddle the horse.

SISTER:

In the front parlor the little maiden is left alone.
Her Elder Brother has gone to saddle a horse.
She enters the embroidery chamber to change her dress.
The little maiden is changing her dress, preparatory to leaving for her mother-in-law's home.
Putting on her new dress;
Wrapping up her old dresses;
Carrying her bundles, she comes out again to the parlor.
There she meets her sister-in-law, her brother's wife.
She speaks to her brother's wife:
"Good-natured sister-in-law, pray listen.
Today my brother is to send me back to my mother-in-law,
To my dreadful mother-in-law.
When the next festival comes,
Please, please do not forget to invite me to your home."
Having thus begged her sister-in-law,
The maiden comes to the gate, waiting for her brother.

WANG:

With a saddled horse for my sister,
I have come toward the gate.
There I see my sister shedding tears,
Tears like the never-stopping swift shuttles.
Leading the horse, I call to her:
"Little Sister, please mount."

SISTER:

The little maiden has mounted the horse;
Her Elder Brother is carrying her packages.
The little maiden rides ahead, ahead—

WANG:

Her Elder Brother follows, follows—

SISTER:

The little maiden rides through the wilderness.

WANG:

Tell me, tell me, oh! Little Sister,
Tell me what lies heavy in your heart?

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SISTER:

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Good Elder Brother, your sister will
Unbosom her grief to you.
Our father was Squire in this district.
He promised a family in Chang-tse-p'o
That they should have me as their daughter-in-law.
But soon he died and a day was selected
To marry me to the family of doom.
I thought I was going to a rich house.
But instead I got a very severe sister-in-law and a treacherous mother-in-law.
Today I must return to their house again,
I pray not to live, but to die soon.
When your poor sister is dead, Elder Brother,
You will see that they bury her body, well dressed, in a good coffin.
If you do this I won't forget you even in the spirit world.
If my corpse is dressed in poor clothes and put in a poor coffin,
I shall be buried with endless griefs.

WANG:

Do not weep so, Sister,
Onward we must go.
I blame the go-between woman who lied.
I blame her. I hate her.
Our parents died when you and I were very young.
They believed all that the go-between said,
And consented to give you to the family in Chang-tse-p'o.
When you were eighteen years old, on a chosen lucky day,
You were carried to the dreadful house of your husband, where you were married.
Instead of a rich family with food, clothes, and a beautiful home,
You were married to nothing but a severe sister-in-law and a cruel mother-in-law.
This ill fortune was unexpected, Sister.
Fortunately you are yet young, being now only nineteen.
Your mother-in-law is over 60. She won't live another 60 years.
Your sister-in-law is eighteen. Before long she will be married and go to another house.
Those who should die will die and those who should marry will be married.
Then, my sister, you will be left alone to enjoy life.

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Then the narrow path of your life will be widened into a highway;
The little stream of your life will become a great river;
A small tender willow twig will grow to be a large tree, old and venerable.
After many years the daughter-in-law will become a mother-in-law.
Little Sister, you are not the first daughter-in-law;
Many others have had a fate more cruel than yours.
Listen to your brother's advice and do not think of death.
If you die a natural death I will see that you have good clothes and a good coffin.
If you die an unnatural death, your brother will do nothing for you.
Put up with what Heaven has assigned to you, Sister.
Onward, onward, let us go—

SISTER:

The little maiden whips the horse to cross the bridge;

WANG:

Elder Brother and Younger Sister have both crossed the bridge;

SISTER:

Sitting on horseback I look around.

WANG:

Yonder, not far, is Chang-tse-p'o, your mother-in-law's home.

SISTER:

The little maiden whips her horse to enter the village.

WANG:

Sister, here we are in front of your mother-in-law's house.
Let me help you to dismount.

SISTER:

I dismount.

WANG:

Here is your package, Sister. When you go in
You must ask after your mother-in-law's health,
Say "How-do-you-do" to your sister-in-law.
Though they are unkind to you, you must do what is right.

SISTER:

I want to ask my brother to come in and have some lunch,
But do not dare—

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WANG:

Thank you, but I am neither hungry nor thirsty.
I ought, perhaps, to go in to wish your mother-in-law good health.
Since I have so often disputed with her, she can have no desire to see me.
I am going home directly. Goodbye—goodbye.

SISTER:

Ah me! In front of this cruel gate I am left alone,
And I must not stand here too long.
The ugly daughter-in-law cannot avoid meeting her mother-in-law.
Now I go to meet my fate.

THE DOUBLE LOCK CHEST

(synopsis)

ONCE THERE WAS a man by the name of Yü Lao-i who lived in Yü Chia Tien. He had a younger sister who had been married to a man by the name of Wang, and lived in Wang Chia Chai. These two families were known as wealthy homes. Yü Lao-i and his younger sister made an agreement that their children should marry each other. Not long afterwards Yü Lao-i had a daughter named Yang Chieh and his younger sister had a boy named Wang Chin-chui. These children were later engaged to be married.

Not long afterward, there was a big fire in the home of Wang Chin-chui. All their property and houses were burned and Wang Chin-chui became poorer and poorer day by day. When Yü Lao-i heard the news, he was greatly disappointed over his daughter's betrothal and contrived to break the engagement. He made up a story that his daughter had died and pretended to hold a funeral service for her. When this news reached Wang Chin-chui's ear, he was deceived by it. He finally became so poor that he had to become a beggar.

When he learned that Wang Chin-chui had become a beggar, Yü Lao-i was very happy. Yü Lao-i then engaged his daughter to Chiang

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Wu-chu, who lived on the east side of the village not far from his home. Chiang Wu-chu was also a wealthy man, and had a younger sister by the name of Lin Chieh. One day when Wang Chin-chui was walking along the lane asking for food at every door, he happened to come to Chiang Wu-chu's home. It happened that at that time Lin Chieh was standing at the door and saw him. She was surprised that such a splendid young man had become a beggar. For the sake of charity she secretly gave him ten taels of silver. Later a servant of Chiang Wu-chu's home came out and said to him, "Tomorrow is our master's wedding day. You can get plenty of food to eat if you come tomorrow."

Upon hearing this he felt very much pleased and thought that if a wedding ceremony was to be held in the bridegroom's home, a similar one would also be held in the bride's home. So he decided to go to the bridegroom's home on the next day and on the following day to the bride's home. When he went to ask who the bride was and where she was living, he learned it was Yü Lao-i's daughter who was about to be married. On hearing this he was very much surprised because he knew that his uncle, Yü Lao-i, had no other daughter than Yang Chieh. So he hurried back home and told the news to his mother. When she heard it she told Chin-chui the whole story of his past engagement.

As Wang Chin-chui was doubtful about this matter, he boldly went to his uncle's home to ask about it. It happened that, when Wang Chin-chui went to his uncle's home, both his uncle and his aunt were away on business and only their daughter, Yang Chieh, was at home. When the girl saw Chin-chui come in, she immediately got him something to eat. After a while, she heard her parents coming back. She was very much upset, and hurriedly told Chin-chui to hide in her wedding chest.

On the next day the chest was moved over to Chiang Wu-chu's home, but no one except Yang Chieh knew that Wang was in it. Lin Chieh, however, opened the chest and was greatly surprised to find Wang Chin-chui there. He whispered to her, "Please don't be afraid. I am Wang Chin-chui, to whom you gave ten taels of silver." Finding him to be that man, she put him into another chest.

Soon after the wedding ceremony, Yang Chieh remembered that Chin-chui was still in her chest. When there was no one in her room, she hurriedly opened the chest and was greatly surprised to find that he had disappeared. Just then, Lin Chieh happened to come in and saw what she was doing. She jokingly said to her, "Have you gone crazy over something you have lost from your chest?"

Knowing that Lin Chieh had discovered her secret, Yang Chieh told all the past story to her and asked her for aid. However, Lin Chieh had

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fallen in love with Chin-chui and asked Yang Chieh to help her. Finally the girls decided that they both would marry Chin-chui.

That night Wang Chin-chui and the two girls managed to escape from the home of Chiang Wu-chu and went to Lin Chieh's ancestral temple. No one was there, and the three knelt before the altar and made their vows. The village night watchman found them and reported Wang Chin-chui to the court. When the case was heard both Yü I to-i and Wang Wu-chu were accused by the magistrate, one of breaking the engagement of his daughter and the other of attempting to marry a girl already engaged. They both pleaded guilty and were heavily fined. The fines were given as a dowry to Wang Chin-chui and his two wives, who lived happily together.

LIU YÜ-LAN

(synopsis)

A YOUNG WOMAN by the name of Liu Yü-lan was betrothed, when she was a child, to a Mr. Li Shao-hsien, who was doing business in a far-away town. One day Miss Liu was accidentally seen by a rich money-lender, Mr. Chang Ching-ch'uan, who came to her father to negotiate a loan. Her beauty so struck the rich man that he asked a distant relative of hers, Tang San, to act as go-between and arrange for her to be his wife. Knowing the advantage of serving a rich man, Tang San was willing to do what he could, but Miss Liu absolutely refused to listen to anything of the kind because her parents had already betrothed her to Mr. Li. The rich Mr. Chang was so deeply in love with the girl that he could not easily forget her. Thinking of her, he could neither sleep well nor enjoy his food. Finally he gave 50 taels of silver to Tang San and begged him to try again and to try very hard to get the girl for him. Moved by the money, Tang San made up a story that Mr. Li had died of sudden illness. He hoped that, because of this change of circumstance, Miss Liu would change her mind and marry the rich man. However, she wished to remain loyal to her betrothed, whether he was living or dead. In the meantime, Mr. Li, hearing of the scheme and his falsely reported death, hurried home and was married immediately.

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CHANG MEI-YING GOES TO THE CAPITAL TO FIND HER HUSBAND

(synopsis)

KAO WEN-CHU married Chang Mei-ying. Kao went to the capital to take the examination. He passed as "Chuang Yuan", the highest. The Premier, impressed by his success, forced him to marry his daughter. Kao could not send any word to his former wife and felt very sad. One day he was sitting all alone in his sitting room and saw a poem written in a handwriting very similar to his wife's. He was greatly surprised, for he knew she never went out and so could not have been in his home. He began to think about her. While he was sitting there thinking about his wife he heard a voice that he thought belonged to a ghost. At first he was afraid, then said that he was the top scholar, who did not need to be afraid of anything. Looking out, he saw a woman in the courtyard. He invited her in and later found that she was his first wife, who had finally managed to come to the capital after many hardships. There, in order to live, she managed to get a maid's position in the Premier's household and found her husband there. As she told her story it turned out that the Premier, imitating Kao's handwriting, had written her a letter divorcing her. She would not accept the divorce, as Kao owed a great deal of his success to her, so she came to the capital to see what she could do. When she found that the letter of divorce was a forgery she accused the Premier before the Emperor.

FINDING A SUBSTITUTE TO ATTEND A MEMORIAL SERVICE

(synopsis)

ONCE THERE WAS a couple named Wang Chui-chung who had a very ugly daughter. Through the connivance of a skilled go-between they managed to have her engaged to the son of Chang Piao. Chang Piao's mother later learned of the deception, became very angry, and worried herself to death. Chang Piao wanted to use the opportunity of her death to see if his future daughter-in-law was as ugly as was rumored. He therefore invited the Wangs to bring their daughter to the funeral

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539 ceremonies. The Wangs became very worried and in order to cover up the matter, they persuaded Li Feng-ying, the beautiful daughter of a neighbor, to go with them to the funeral and impersonate their daughter. The Changs discovered the deception and, instead of having the funeral services, they insisted on the immediate marriage of Miss Li to their son.

FOUR QUARRELS

(synopsis)

THERE WAS once a woman by the name of Chang Szu-chieh, whose daughter was married to a fool. One day the woman went with her husband to see their daughter. When she saw her mother the daughter became exceedingly sad and, while they were talking together, she told her mother all about her bad conditions. During their conversation, however, her mother-in-law happened to come in and hear what they were talking about. She became ve.y angry and began to quarrel with her daughter-in-law.

While they were quarreling, the girl's husband came in. Not knowing what to do, he immediately went to ask his wife about the matter, but she did not answer him. And his mother-in-law not only refused to answer him, but even scolded him seriously. When the boy's mother saw him scolded by his mother-in-law she got angry and quarreled with her. Thus a quarrel arose between these two families. Finally the trouble was peacefully settled by the fool himself.

THE DEATH OF LI WEN-CH'ENG

(synopsis)

ONCE THERE WAS a man by the name of Li Wen-ch'eng who was a soldier of General Ma. He was victorious in battle and was called by the Emperor to come and receive promotion and reward. The Emperor promoted him to a high rank but Li, hearing it was a low rank, was greatly disappointed.

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As he had been away from home for about twelve years, he was very anxious to go back for a visit. When they heard that he was going, his master and his companion presented him with a horse and many taels of silver as a means of showing their good will.

On his way home, he came to a fork in the road. One road led to his father-in-law's village, Chen Chia-ying, the other to his home village, Ch'i Li-ying. He imagined that, as he had been away from home for several years, his wife, because of poverty, would probably be living in his father-in-law's home so he went to Chen Chia-ying to see her.

As he entered the village he saw his wife's brother, Chen Hu, out hunting. Li Wen-ch'eng had never seen him before so did not know him. He asked the boy, who was a fool, where Chen Liang, his father-in-law, lived. To his inquiry, the boy made many foolish answers which did not have anything to do with the question but finally he led Li Wen-ch'eng home.

His father-in-law, Chen Liang, gave him a hearty reception. Feeling very grateful for this kind of treatment, Li Wen-ch'eng presented his father-in-law with fifty taels of silver. But giving him this present was a fatal mistake for, believing that his son-in-law possessed a great deal of money, Chen Liang planned to commit murder in order that he might get all the money. During dinner he strongly urged Li Wen-ch'eng to drink many cups of wine. Finally, when Li Wen-ch'eng was intoxicated, his father-in-law killed him and buried him under the floor of the room.

The same night Li Wen-ch'eng's ghost went to his own home. At the door he was stopped by the gods who watch over the gate until he explained who he was. In a dream he told his wife about his death. At first she thought it was only a dream and did not believe it. But afterwords she began to wonder a great deal about it and the next day went to her father's home to see what had happened. As soon as she entered the door, Chen Hu, her younger brother, said to her, "Are you coming here on account of my brother-in-law?" After hearing these words she had no doubt that her dream was true. Thereupon she discovered her husband's corpse in the room.

Finding that his daughter had detected what he had done, Chen Liang asked Chen Hu to kill her, but his daughter understood their plot. She went to her brother and said: "Don't you want a bag to put your birds into? I have brought one for you. Would you like some sugar? I have brought you some." Her brother was a foolish boy and did not know that his sister was fooling him. When he opened his mouth for the sugar she threw dust in his face, filling his mouth and blinding his

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eyes.

A JOKE IN LUNG-SHAN

(synopsis)

539 ONCE THERE WAS a poor scholar by the name of Wang. He wanted to go to the capital to take the examination for the degree of Chuang Yuan, but he had no money for his traveling expenses. He went to consult his wife and asked her for some financial help, but she refused his request. Thereupon he became very angry and quarreled with her. His wife finally said, "If you dare to go down to the valley without my permission, I will ask my men to chop off your legs and scratch out your eyes." To this he replied, "In this place I know it is the custom for a woman to be more powerful than a man, but down in the valley men rule, so I must go down even if you take my life."

After he said this he tried to kill himself. His wife immediately stopped him and said, "Why are you so angry and simple? How dare I stop you from going down to the valley?"

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The clan property was usually land that had been given or left as a legacy to the clan by some of its prosperous members. The land was regularly rented. Any money included in the clan property was usually loaned at interest, ordinarily at 1.5 per cent per month. The clan property was looked after in turn by the different families. The details on some clan property, income, and expenses are given in Chapter II.

It was said that the geomancers who helped locate suitable graves must spend 10 years before they could properly recognize the footprints of the dragon and 20 years before they could master the art of locating peaceful graves. Also that, as the dragon is an animal that walks near the water, it is proper to locate graves near the water.

When a family graveyard had been filled the geomancer was called in to find a new burial plot with auspicious influences that would add to the family welfare. This might be one plot for the large family or, if there were several families whose ancestors were buried in the original graveyard, each family might establish a separate plot in the same way that a family was often divided after the death of the father, with the sons setting up separate households.

In order to maintain the continuity of the generations some families exhumed their parents' bones and buried them in the position of honor at the top of the new graveyard. Whether this was done or not depended on the will of the clan and the decision of the geomancer. Neither would allow anything that would break the auspicious influence of the old graveyard.

If the decision was against moving the parents' bones a small symbolic coffin was often buried in the new graveyard. Then the current head of the family and his wife would be buried at the top of the plot, his sons and their wives in the next row and his grandsons and their wives in the third row.

If the geomancer approved of moving the parents' bones from the old to the new graveyard, the grave was opened at night or a mat-shed was built over the grave to keep out the sunlight lest it harm the spirits of the dead. A small coffin would still be used to hold the bones that were moved from the old to the new graveyard.

Proverbs

Proverbs, customary sayings, and rhymes were very numerous in the Ting Hsien villages. A few samples, selected by our Chinese associates,

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539 are given to show how they comment on family life, farming, and village life.

Feeling hungry and cold, a child goes to his mother.
He knows nothing but how to play and be happy.
If his mother is away for a day,
He cries and cries for her.
Seeing his mother's sorrow, he, too, becomes sad;
That is the real love for his mother.
After he grows up and gets married, then
He forgets his mother entirely.
He seeks happiness with his wife every day.
One day's separation from her is like ten to him.
In his childhood, he loves his mother best;
But after he gets married, there is a change in his affection.
Then he no longer loves his mother the most, but his wife.
He forgets his filial duty to his mother
And so cannot be regarded as a man.

A jay is a long-tailed bird.
Finding a mate, he forgets his mother.
He takes his mother away to the desolate valley,
But keeps his wife at home.
He cooks rice and soup for her.
Although she dislikes it,
He begs her to eat it.

A small girl,
Climbing up a ladder to play,
Has her eyeball pecked by a crow.
Her parents scold the crow,
But her sister-in-law comes out and says:
"What, are you pecked?"

The bean-sticks are full of beans.
A daughter goes to see her mother.
When they see their daughter arrive,
Her father goes to fetch her bag,
Her mother goes to get the baby,
But her sister-in-law turns her head
And shows an angry face.

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The daughter says, "Don't look at me that way,
I won't stay long.
While my parents are alive
I will come occasionally to see them.
When they are gone, we will separate forever".

There is a man who had many wives.
Within a year he was married fifteen times.
But all his beautiful wives have been sold,
And only an ugly woman remains.
Not obeying the command to brush the pan,
She stands on the pan scolding her mother-in-law.
Not obeying the command to brush the jar,
She stands on the jar scolding her father-in-law.
Not obeying the command to brush the bowl,
She uses the bowl to wash her face.
Not obeying the command to brush the ladle,
She uses the ladle to wash her feet.
Not obeying the command to water the garden,
She uses the water-wheel as her plaything.
Not obeying the command to dig the ditch,
She stands by the side of the ditch scolding her uncle.

A lady is spinning with a spinning wheel;
It makes a noise like tra la la.
After her mother-in-law's death,
She takes charge of the family.
She bakes many cakes and fries cucumbers.
Then she shuts the door and begins to eat.
Presently she has eaten too much.
Surrounded by people,
She cannot walk or move,
But cries to her neighbors for help.

Stale food can not be easily warmed.
A second wife can not be easily controlled.

Beat a lamp-stand with a stick.
The grandfather has married a woman
With two big feet and a slanting mouth.
She looks so much like a crocodile,

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539 That the old man is greatly disappointed with her ugly face.
Then the old man's grandson said:
"Please leave our home a while,
At least until my grandfather has recovered"
Beat a lamp-stand with a stick.
This old man has marr. d a beautiful young lady.
She powders her face and puts flowers in her hair.
Grandpa is tickled to death.

The cotton has grown from the ground.
A grandmother loves her daughter's child.
Seeing this, the child's aunt is displeased.
"Aunt! aunt! don't frown at me,
It does not help matters".

If you have money
Don't marry a woman who has a husband;
Don't buy a field along the road.

On the second day of the Second Moon,
The dragon raises his head.
The Emperor plows the fields
And the ministers help him drive the cows.
The Empress, the National Mother,
Makes the porridge herself and sends it
To the Emperor and the ministers working in the fields.
All pray for a rich harvest throughout the year.

The farmer is always busy with his work.
Wherever he goes, he carries a manure-basket.
Within a year he gathers several piculs of fertilizer
And with this he cultivates his field.

Don't blame Heaven if you haven't
Dug your cabbage before the winter solstice.
Don't be sorry for yourself if you haven't
Protected your onions before the coming of the first frost.

Cultivate a field without enough capital,
And you cannot expect much return;
Cultivate a field without fertilizer,
And you do not get a good crop any year.

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Rain at night, clear skies and sunshine during the day.
The crops will burst the barn.

The farm hand says:
"Through a sieve the flour is sifted.
The quality of work depends upon the quality of food.
If you don't give me good food I will dilly-dally in the field,
Then you will see who is the one to lose".

Men seek men;
The birds seek the forest.
Monks seek the priests;
While vagabonds stay with scoundrels.

Here is a lady with two big feet.
She walks with a big noise.
But having big feet
She will not suffer in her mother-in-law's home.[2]

A blind fortune-teller's mouth
Is like a bottomless dipper.
Whatever question you ask, he can answer.

To the hungry everything is sweet;
To the well-fed even sugar is tasteless.

2. I.e., she will be able to work.